CALLS SUPPLIES 'ADEQUATE'

Army Secretary Sees Operations at Arsenal

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"The supply of ammunition for U. S. military forces is steadily improving, and there are adequate supplies in Korea to enable the soldiers of the Eighth army to take care of themselves."

This was the statement made by Robert Stevens, new secretary of the army, yesterday afternoon at the conclusion of a four-hour inspection tour at the Ordnance Ammunition Center and Joliet Arsenal.

Secretary Stevens, a broad-shouldered six-footer dressed conservatively in an oxford gray double-breasted suit and dark striped tie, answered questions of reporters freely, although explaining at the start that "I'm new in this job and I'm doing the best I can to learn all about ammunition manufacture, as well as the many other phases of activity connected with the department of the army."

Stevens flew to Chicago from Washington early yesterday in a MATS Super-Constellation, landing at Midway airport. His arsenal visit was conducted with the precision of a railway timetable, with the exception of the closing press conference which ran a little overtime. The secretary flew back to Washington last evening. He was accompanied to the arsenal by Maj. Gen. E. L. Ford, Army chief of ordnance.

"MY VISIT here is not specifically concerned with the recent talk of ammunition shortages," Secretary Stevens said. "I have been wanting to see the ammunition center and I took advantage of the first opportunity to come here. They have been keeping me very busy in Washington."

Although he did not elaborate on his statement that supplies of ammunition in Korea are "adequate," Secretary Stevens held that position firmly whenever the question was brought up. He offered the "amateur opinion" that the difficulties that may have existed on the Korean front in the past arose from the stabilization of the battle line, causing a change in the style of warfare. Emphasis was turned to heavy artillery, he said, because of the necessity to blast the Communist foe out of strongly fortified positions. Thus demand for heavy artillery shells may have exceeded the supply at certain times.

"I AM NOT concerned with investigating what happened in the past so much as I am with the present and the future," Stevens said at one point. "I think it is important to bend every effort toward increasing our production, and I know none of us will be satisfied until we feel that our position, with respect to all supplies, is comfortable."

Asked whether there is possibility of closer co-operation among the services in the matter of ordering supplies and drawing specifications, Stevens replied: "The three service secretaries — that is, the other two and myself — are all good friends and we are extremely anxious to co-operate together, to the end that the services themselves get together in various areas to a greater degree. I think the chances of improvement in that field are excellent."

Stevens said that one of the important tasks before him, as he sees it, is to convey to others "a sense of urgency" in everything that the department of the army is attempting to do.

"IF WE NEED anything for ammunition program, any company in the nation should be willing to help us on that particular problem. There is definite need for a greater recognition of the urgency of the situation in some areas and among some persons outside the military," the secretary said.

Asked to compare the ammunition production establishment, as he has seen it thus far, with operation of private industry, Stevens replied that "this is a very fine operation from the standpoint of efficiency and safety, and compares very favorably with what is being done in private industry."

"I would like to feel, of course," he added, "that the conversations that I have had with Gen. Ford and with Brig. Gen. W. E. Laidlaw, commanding general of the ammunition center, may have contributed something toward further improvement of ordnance production.

"MY CHIEF purpose is to help break any bottlenecks that may develop, and to aid in the building up of the defense establishment in every way possible."

Secretary Stevens, prior to his appointment as secretary of the army, was chairman of the board of J. P. Stevens & Co., Inc., textile manufacturing concern. He served as a second lieutenant of field artillery in World War I and was a colonel in the office of the quartermaster general in World War II. He was awarded the Legion of Merit and the D. S. M. for his services in the second war. His home is at South Plainfield, N. J.